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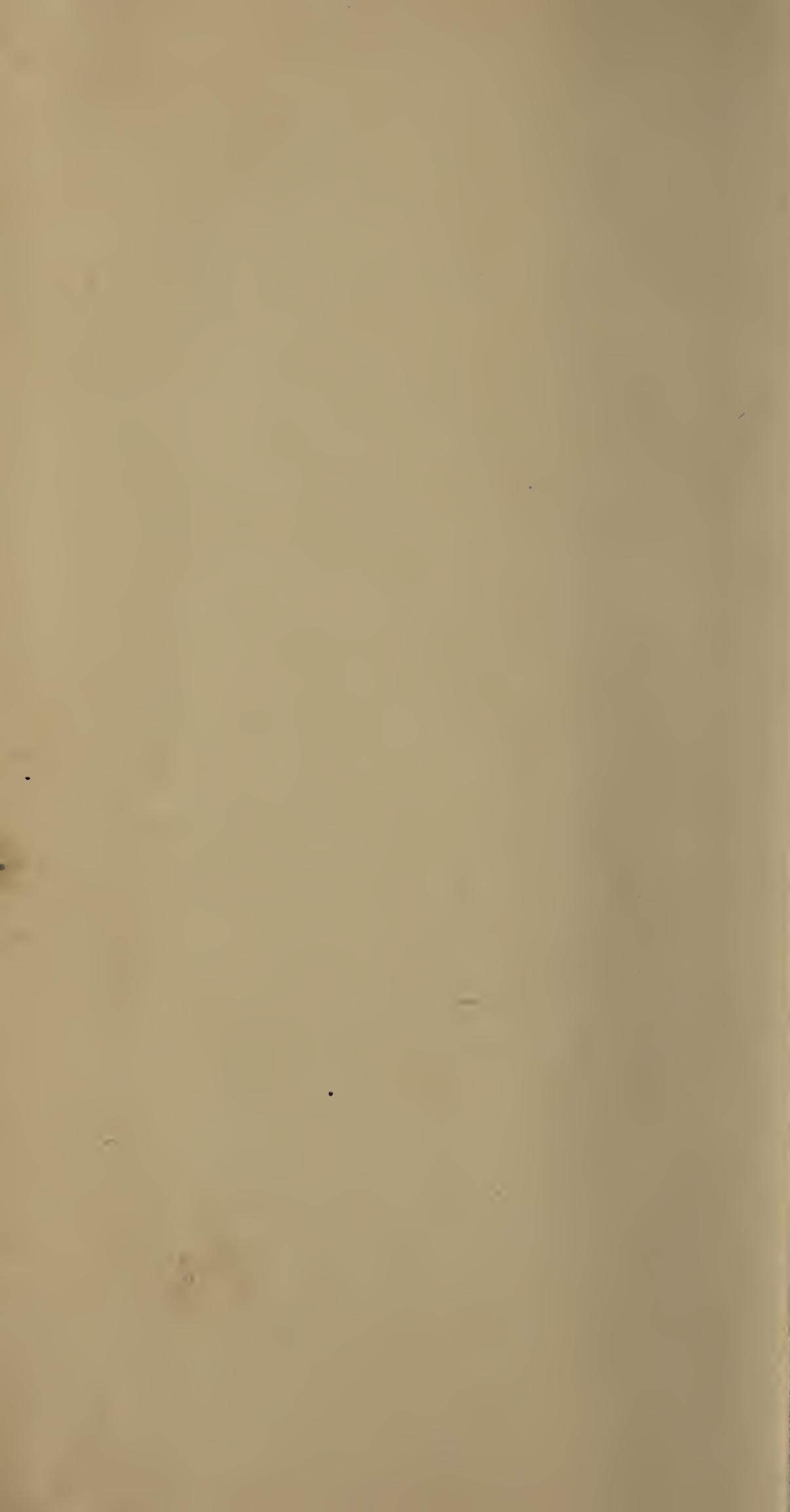
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Family History
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A FAMILY HISTORY
MEMORIES OF THE PAST
WITH A GLANCE INTO THE
FUTURE AND THE LEGACY OF
A MINISTER

John Stoltzfus

1927

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**OR MEMORIES OF THE PAST
WITH A GLANCE INTO THE
FUTURE AND THE LEGACY OF
A MINISTER**

Stoltzfus, John, Sr.

Set up and printed, on request, almost word for word according to the content of a manuscript written by the author, by Samuel Ernst, in the office of the "Waffenlose Waechter" in Millwood near Gap, Lancaster County, Pa. (1571-73)

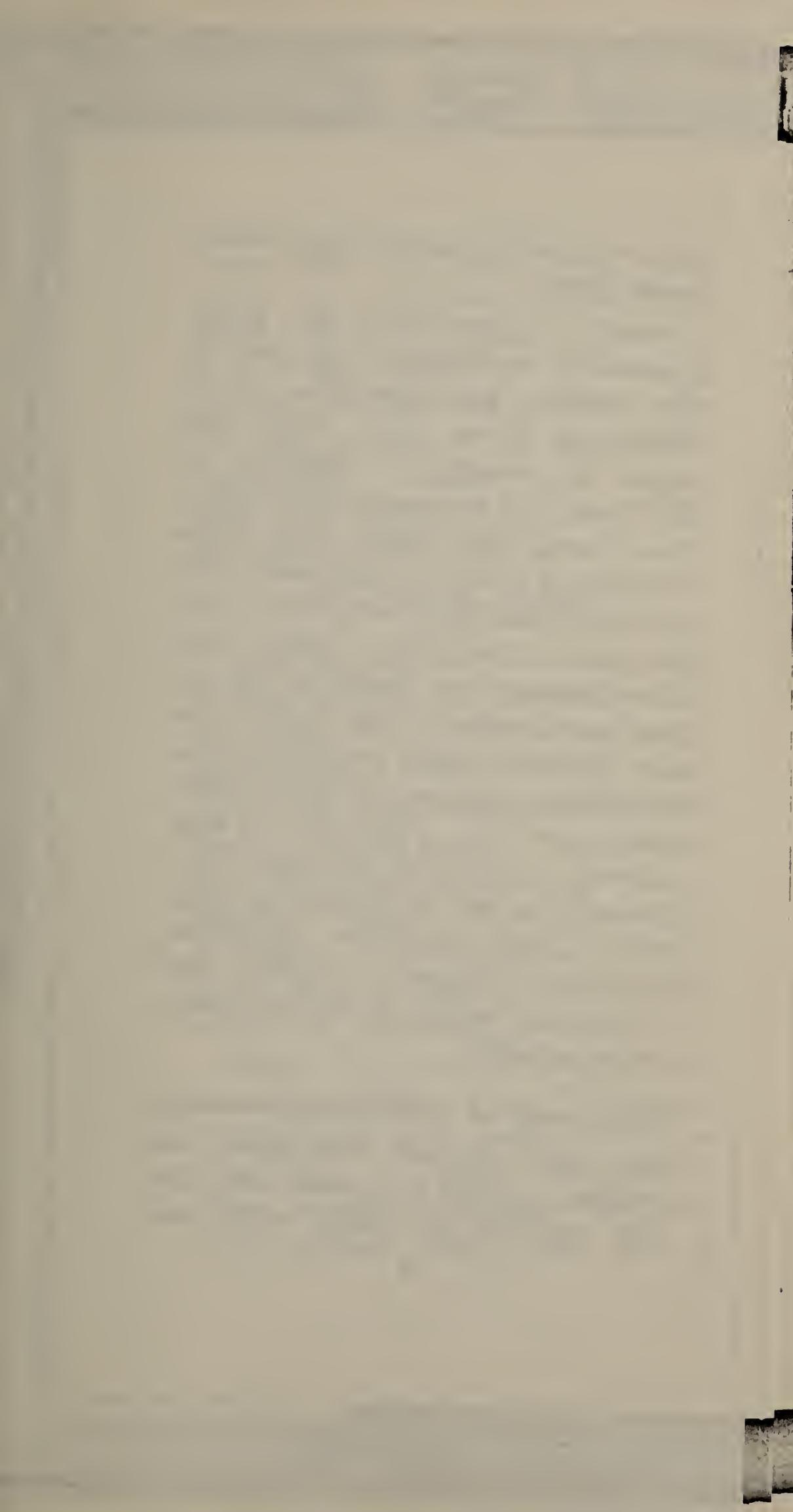
**From the Time of our Fathers to
the Present Time**

It may be a pleasure to you children, as well as grandchildren and others, to read or hear something of the past.

In the year 1766 great-grandfather Nicholas Stoltzfus of Zweibruecken, Germany, came to America, with a son by the name of Christian Stoltz-

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ius eighteen years of age, and three daughters. They settled in Berks County, Pennsylvania, where Nicholas died and was buried near Reading, Pa. Grandfather Stoitzfus married a woman named Gerber. To them were born three sons, John, Jacob, and Christian. Later grandmother Stoltzfus died and was buried near Reading, Pa. After this he married a widow nee Kinig; her husband, who had died, was a Lantz, with whom she had had two sons, John and Samuel. Grandfather Christian then moved to Lancaster County, where three sons were born to him, Abraham, David and Solomon, and six daughters, Catherine, Elizabeth, Anna, Barbara, Fronica, and Magdalena. These have all died and are buried in the Millcreek burying-ground in Lancaster County, Pa. Father Jacob Stoltzfus died in 1810 when we were all young, leaving four orphans; Barbara, Christian, John, and Joseph. Our mother's name was Maria, nee Blank, and her mother was a Kinig. She remained a widow and died in



her sixty-fourth year and was buried beside father.

About the year 1756 the great-grandfather on Mother's side came to this country: her grandfather, John Holly, was eleven years old at that time. He married a daughter of Dr. Blank, had four sons, John, Christian, Peter, and David, and seven daughters, Catherine, Magdalena, Barbara, Christina, Elizabeth, Maria, and Feronica. Grandfather Holly, and Grandmother, were buried in the old Holly burying-place in the valley. Father Christian Holly married Elizabeth Mast, daughter of Jacob Mast, Bishop of the Conestoga Valley (church). They had two sons, David and John, and six daughters, Magdalena, Maria, Catherine, Elizabeth, Lydia, and Feronica. Father and Mother are buried in the old Holly burying-ground.

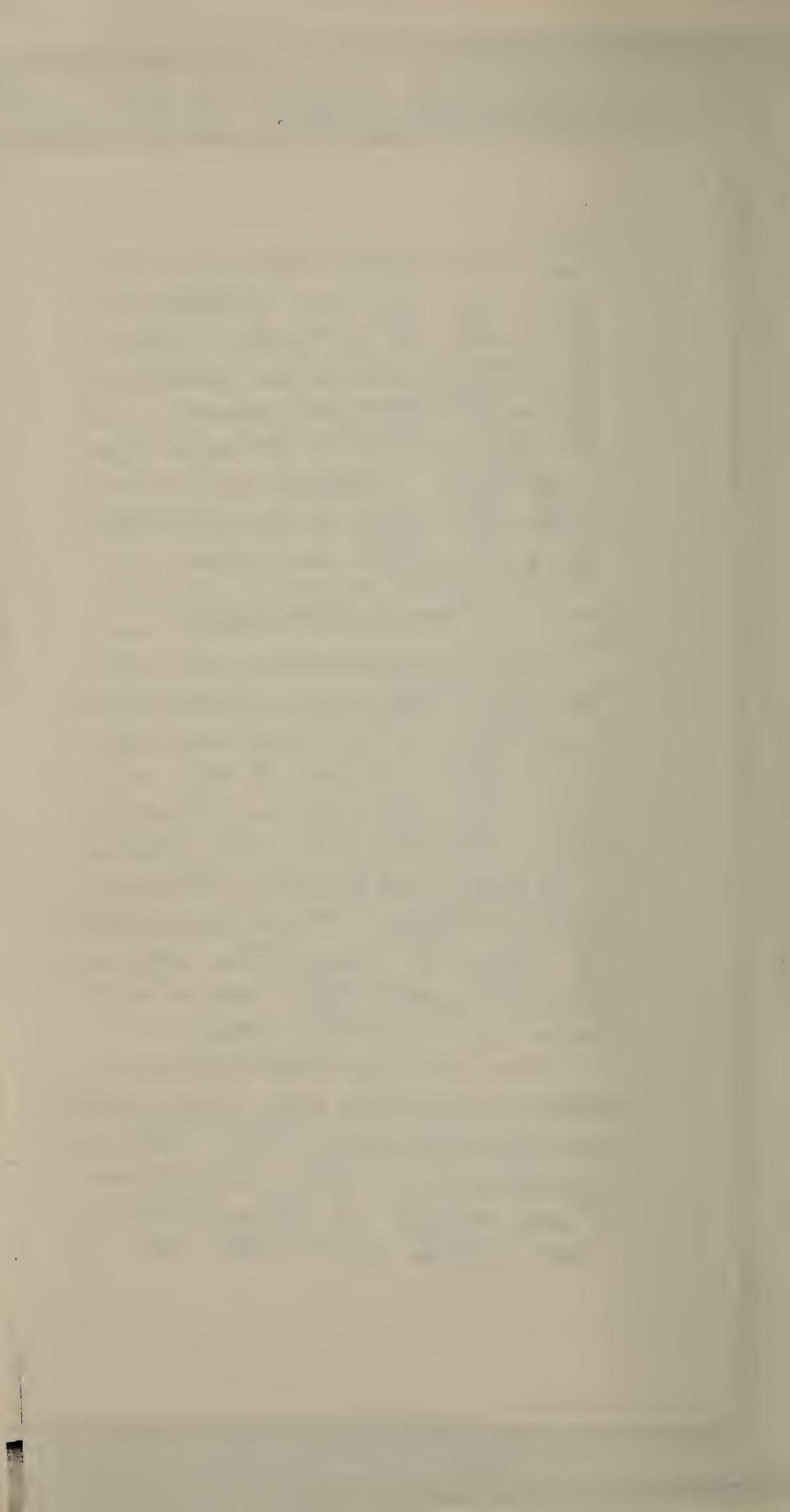
The Manner of Life of our Ancestors was simple in food and drink and clothing. Coffee was little used; the diet consisted of water, milk, tea,

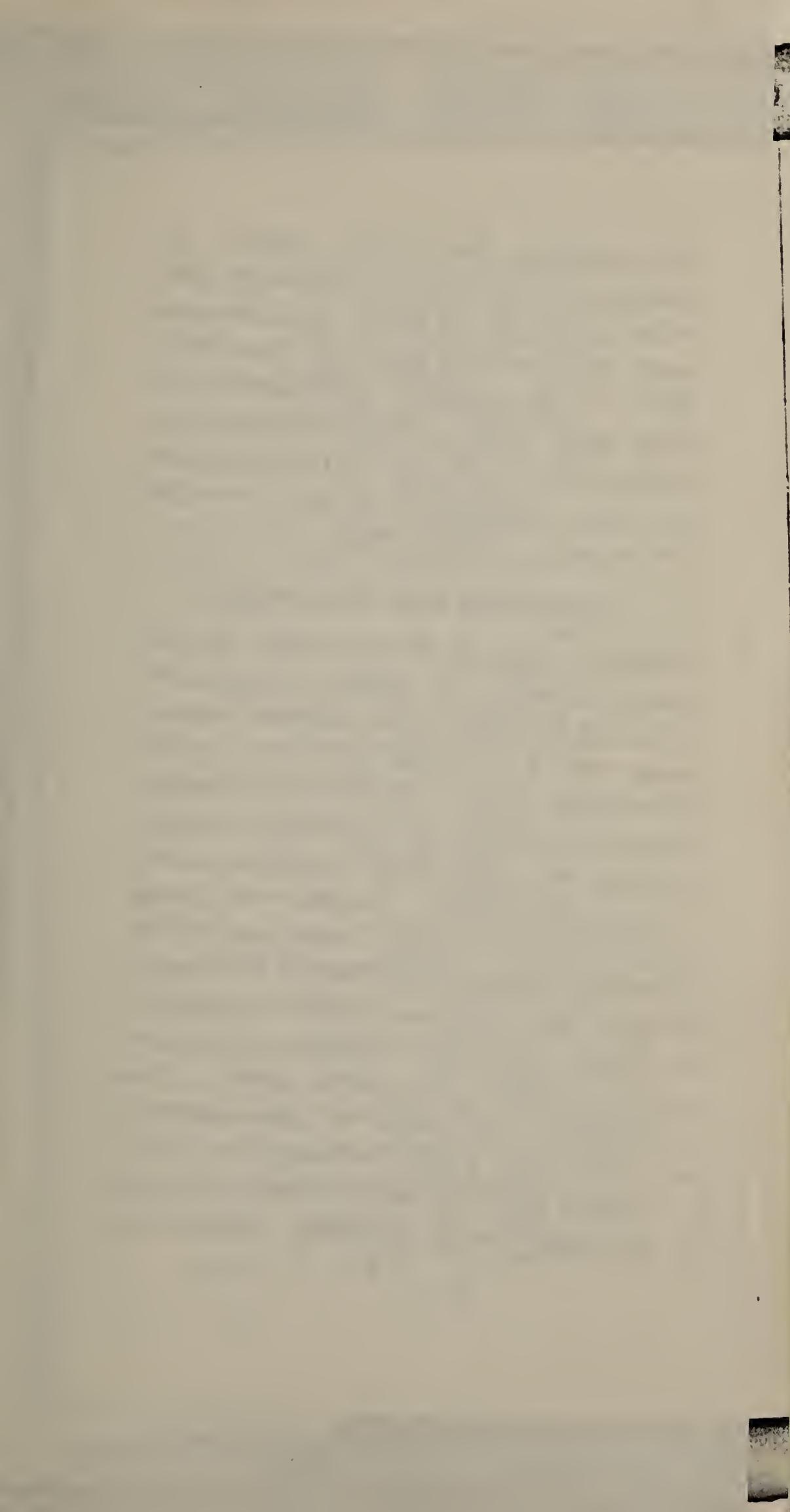
soup, bread and milk, etc. They sowed flax and spun it, which was good work for the girls. They did well if they finished the spinning by February. They also spun the wool on small as well as on larger spinning-wheels. Industry and honesty made them happy, as did also frugality, good conduct, and virtue.

How the Men Lived

They plowed and sowed by hand. Wheat was cut with the sickle. One could often see twenty or more reapers cutting in a row, of both sexes. Later the cradle was used (dann die Kne) to cut the grain. They threshed with horses and flails and did well to finish by March. Flour was hauled in wagons to Philadelphia, and the wheat to mills about twelve miles away and sometimes farther.

About the year 1800 or near this time the turnpike from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was opened. This was considered a great achievement. Great numbers of teams used this road, hauling wheat, meat, etc., to





Philadelphia and other places, as well as store-goods to Pittsburgh and other points in the west. Good horses were sold at that time for from \$70-\$80. A government mail-coach used this road once a day from east to west, with which ten to twelve, more or less, passengers a day traveled each way. About 1800,

Inventions and Discoveries

began to appear in the world, to the astonishment of human beings, as though the world were just now awaking out of its sleep after five or six thousand years. There were sowing-machines, mowing machines, cutting-machines, threshing machines, and sewing-machines. Instead of being able to thresh only twenty or thirty bushels per day with horses if all went well, one can now, with a machine, thresh and clean as high as five hundred bushels or more in a day. The railroad also came in this century. Where one could formerly haul in a wagon with six horses four tons more or less twenty or thirty miles day,

they can now move a hundred and fifty to two hundred tons one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles in twenty-four hours. Where formerly eight to ten passengers a day traveled on the turnpike each way, there are now eight to ten trains a day each way, each perhaps carrying three to four hundred passengers at a speed of four hundred to five hundred miles a day or in twenty-four hours. A letter from Ohio to Lancaster County, Pa., formerly cost the receiver twenty-five cents and was on the way perhaps four or five days; now it goes in twelve hours and costs the receiver nothing. A message can be sent a thousand miles and the answer received by telegraph in twelve hours or less. Writing changed to printing. The Gospel, a little book, was first written over a period of many years, but now over a ton of paper is consumed in a single printery in one week and broadcasted over the world so that printing has very likely reached its high point, by means of which the fashions of the

world and other vanities are pictured to the eye.

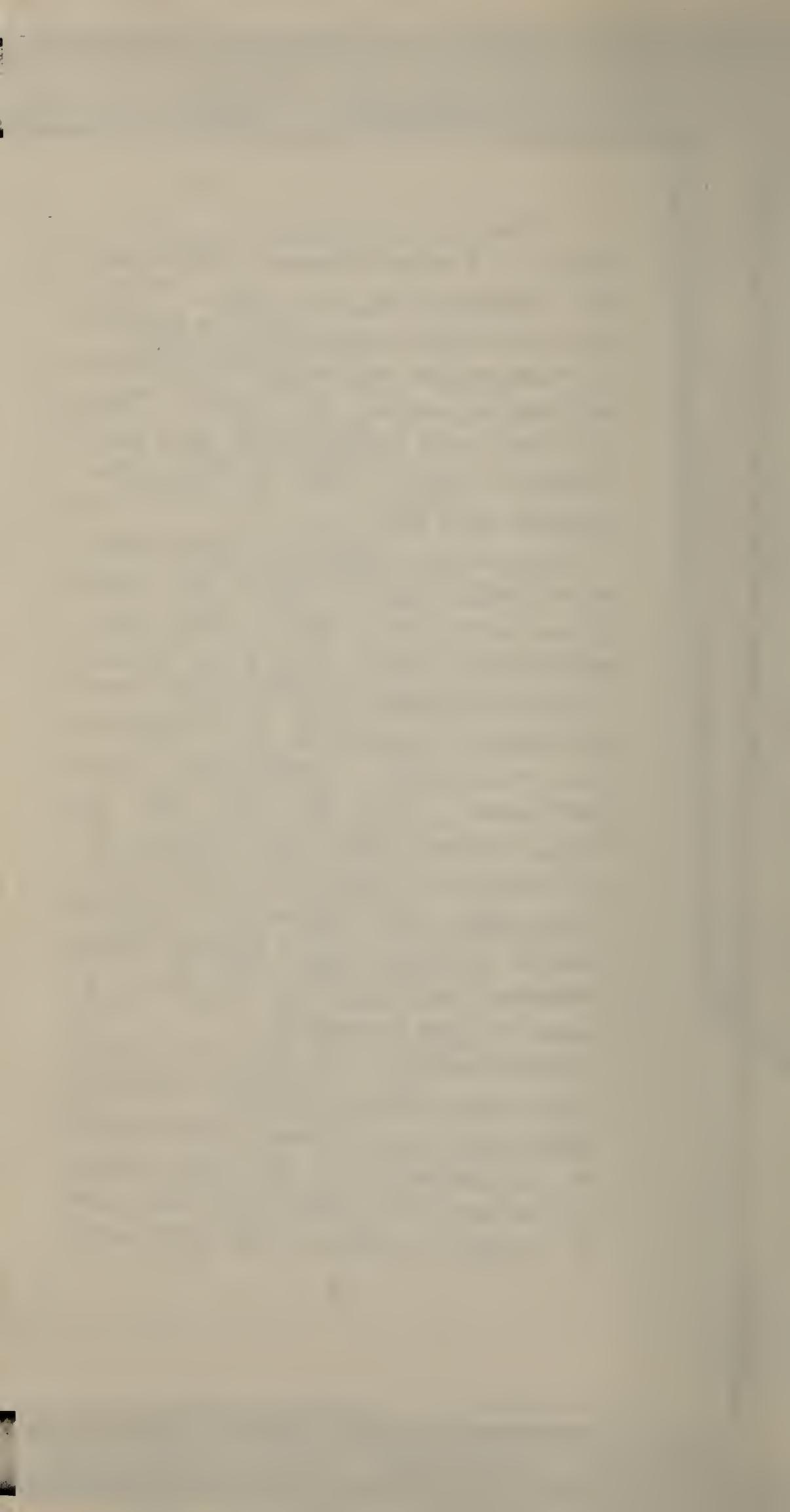
Although I have now mentioned in part what concerns the farmer and transportation, there are still many other Arts and Sciences in manufacture, etc. I remember that nails were once cut by foot on a machine and the heads struck afterwards, that material for shirts was spun and woven by hand and sold at fifty cents a yard, and now one can get manufactured shirt muslin at seven cents a yard. In many other things which are of less value to humanity there have been wonderful inventions.

If our fathers who left this world a hundred or only seventy years ago could suddenly return to this life, would they not observe the change in the world with great surprise? The children who are born now cannot conceive the toil and industry, simplicity and humility, and the life of their pious forefathers. If the father or mother of a household died and one had to go some distance to the burial place, four horses were

hitched to a covered wagon, the corpse was placed upon the wagon. The household which accompanied usually went on the wagon and had often bundles of straw for seats. The mourners rode behind, both men and women. There were no Dearborn wagons then yet.

Many of the forefathers who came from Germany, or went to the west, moved into the "bush," first built cabins, and began with good spirits to clear and fence in their land, without much murmuring or complaining, and looked courageously into the future. They did not have as many rocking-chairs with cushions as now, also no lounges and no carpets. They built their houses for the protection of the body and did not think that they would need a second or a third for one household.

The brethren and sisters received each other with joy always. And if they came from Germany with a letter (of membership) they were gladly received with hand and kiss, and all worked together with glad and



charitable spirit. The food, when there was "meeting," was soup, pie, bread, etc., and water to drink. Those who sat near together drank from one vessel and ate from a common dish with spoons; each one cut bread for himself; since it came onto the table in quarter-loaves. There were at that time no cook-stoves, but great open hearths into which one put pieces of wood four feet or less in length for cooking.

Those who are now living and have arrived at an old age can see for themselves the change in the church, which is one body in Christ, as it is going on, as well as the change in the world, according to human wisdom and the permission of a kind Creator. But, dear children, a much greater change is promised this world, which will not be according to the imaginations of men but in the strength of God with the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ without sin to all those who trust in him for redemption.

Question: How will this be or take place?

Peter writes in his second epistle, third chapter, verse seven: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, are by the same word kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." In verse ten: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Question—when will this be or come to pass? Peter tells us in the eighth verse,—as in a mystery—"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Paul writes, "has anyone the gift of prophecy, it is like to faith." In God's Word it cannot be found that it is ever night with the Lord. And where there is no change in time, how



can one reckon years. So we are to assume that the thousand years refer to this age and this world. According to the interpretation of some, these verses always seemed somewhat dark to me. Then again, according to the interpretation of others who apply it to this world, namely that in six days, Heaven and Earth and everything visible were created, as we read, and one day of creation is to stand for a thousand years in the age of the world. And Peter comes back again to the creation when he says, a thousand years are as a day. Therefore this world will reach its full age in six thousand years.

Therefore the time of the world is to be divided into three parts: first from the Creation to Noah, second to the birth of Christ, and then from the time of Christ's personal walk, life and Kingdom, as Paul writes to the Ephesians, how he will be set on his right hand in Heaven above all principalities and powers, might, Lordships, and everything which may be named, not only in this world but

in the next, and has put all things under his feet, and has placed him as head of the Church, above all—to the end of the world.

Questions? Since the world was granted 120 years for repentance before the day came when Noah entered the ark, how soon then will be the day of the coming of Christ?

Noah stated the years but not the day, until the Lord told him, "Go into the ark, after seven days I will send rain upon the earth." So also according to the word of Peter the years are given but no one knows the day or the hour, not even the angels in heaven, but the Father has reserved it for his power. And since it may be assumed that there is no one now living who knows how long Adam and Eve lived before Eve bore Cain, we can begin to reckon only from that time.

An old Bible History says that it was in the year of the world 4181 that a command went forth from Caesar Augustus that the world

should be counted, when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Luther puts the birth of Christ in the year of the world 3970. Calvin puts the birth of Christ in the year of the world 3947. Now to recognize the difference in their reckoning and add 1880 to this, and then to divide the sum of the three totals by three will give us the year more accurately, according to my notion. But one should not depend too much upon this reckoning because the Apostle John has already said that it is the last hour.

4181	3970	3947	4181	4032
1880	1880	1880	3970	1880
—	—	—	3947	—
6061	5850	5827	—	5912
		3	12098	88
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Eighty-eight years less than 6,000 years.

Now, dear children, since through your prayers and the prayer of two congregations I was entrusted with

the duty of taking heed to the Word and of preaching the Word unto peace, and since the Word teaches us to test the times and to judge for ourselves what is right,—to test all that is taught us,—it may therefore not be out of order to respectfully consider the labors of the Fathers in reckoning the years to the birth of Christ and to compare it with Peter's teaching concerning the end of the world.

Dear children, it may be, if it is God's will, that some of your children may experience the coming of the Lord, if it does not take place sooner.

This terrible time, as the Savior says, "When the Son of Man shall appear, think ye that he shall find faith upon the earth."

The members who belong to the spiritual ark—which is the Church of God built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, who has died and is risen for them and for all those who are truly repentant

and believe, who has redeemed their souls and washed them clean through His death and the shedding of His blood. If we fight the good fight with Paul, finish the course, keep the faith to the end, the crown is reserved for us, if we love His appearing and accept the call from Him unto all the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him in humility with a contrite spirit like the Prodigal Son came to his father.

It may not be so pleasant to confess before God and the House of God "I am the greatest sinner"—for God alone knows the hearts of men—as to say with humble spirit "I have sinned" unto heaven, and do not consider myself worthy to be accepted as the other children who have kept their souls free from all evil desires from youth up; but this exalting of oneself with the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not like other sinners is also not pleasant.

Dear children, since we are not able to leave you the riches of worldly goods, I have thought with the gift

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that was given to me as a weak servant in the House of God which is the Church of God, the spiritual ark, where the souls can arise from the sleep of sin through true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and receive water baptism and subject himself under the easy yoke of Christ—which is His Word and teaching—as He says that we should keep His commands that He has commanded us unto the end of the world such as baptism, the communion, feet-washing, brotherly greeting, discipline, loosing and unloosing, shunning, growing and increasing in all that He has commanded us, to seek to bridle our tongues, to subject ourselves in humility, love, and honor toward everyone, to punish the willing and stubborn sinners by two or three reliable witnesses with the Word of God and the teaching of Jesus for their improvement and not for their destruction, to seek to keep the Church pure from such shameful living, to admonish the erring ones and to bear with the wicked in meekness according to the life and

teaching of Jesus, and to seek to keep ourselves pure and virtuous, to show modesty and virtue in clothing, and to hold ourselves in respect to clothing rather according to the manner of our fathers than in the course and fashion of the world, to fear to transgress the law of nature which is not annulled, to wear hair and beard as is proper and not according to the course and the Prince of this world who dictates at one time this and in a short time that, and not to be driven hither and thither by the wind like a wave of the sea.

Also the women should show modesty and sobriety in clothing, also in the wearing of hair and the head-covering when you come before God for the sake of the angels whose protection and help we need so badly. To leave off that which is not useful for cold or for heat. You will find enough work to do if you do not allow your eyes to stare after the vileness and lust of the world which you have forsaken. To leave off the unnecessary from dresses. Not to

forget how the red dragon drew down to the earth with his tail a third part of the stars which denotes Christendom, since his head will be crushed by Christ yet now he has so much power that with his tail or by charming people with pleasure pulls him who follows him to the broad road where the end is hell and damnation. Not to dress the children with such short clothing that they themselves are ashamed of themselves, and therewith bring them before God and the congregation, without giving heed to their reproving conscience, because God withstands the proud.

To seek to rear the children in virtue and admonition, and teach them to read the Bible that they may learn the law of nature which is opposed to sin, and not so unconcernedly run with the world and learn to know the character of the earth, the water, and its nature instead of their own nature and the sin which is to be punished as is threatened with the rod of God, and again (to learn) the blessing of God and the friendliness and

the goodness of God toward him who fears His word; for through knowledge of the word and the strength of it one can withstand—with God's help, sin, his own flesh, and the devil. And as believing awakened children to be directed into the church of God which endeavors to keep all the commands of God in humility, which are commanded to us, and to seek to bear with one another in patience; to confess and forgive our mistakes toward each other, moderate in confession as also in the approach to prayer, that the hearts may not be scattered but much rather collected for praise and intercession.

Dear children, we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9. Verse 11: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and

godliness: 12. looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Verse 13: Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16. as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. 18.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

Written by me, John Stoltzfus, Sr.

N. B. Translator. The translation is almost uniformly literal. Words in parentheses are not found in the original but implied. Scripture quotations are not translated but are taken from the Authorized English Version. Heading and paragraphs are retained as in the original. H. S. B.

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